

6
Short RULES for Christian
PRACTICE.

DELIVERED AT

HACKNEY CHURCH

ON

Sunday, *May* 31. 1724.

BEING THE

Farewel SERMON

OF THE

LECTURER there.

J. Sneyhe

Published at the Desire of the Parishioners.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. EDLIN, at the *Prince's-Arms*,
over-against *Exeter-Change* in the *Strand*,
M DCCXXIV.

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To the READER.



To the GENTLEMEN and
others, Inhabitants of the
Parish of HACKNEY.

Gentlemen,

SINCE it is your De-
sire to read what you
heard me lately deli-
ver in your Church, as my
last parting Sermon; and it
being your general Request to
me, that it might be printed
for your Edification; I have
readily complied with your
good Motion; and now present
it to you. Andtherather, that
it

JOH. STYPER.

TO the READER.

it may be a standing Remembrance of my sincere Respects for you, who have so well deserved from me these many Years: And that the Subject, being so Practical, may be your Monitor, by reading whereof to put you in mind of your Duty, as you are Christians, solemnly dedicated from your Baptism to Christ and his Service. And thus commending you all to the Blessing of God, I remain,

My dear Brethren in Christ,

Yours, Ever ready to serve you in the

Ministry of the Gospel,

JOH. STRYPE.

take it from this Text, to full, to com-
prehensive of the Christian's Duty in



and other able and godly Preachers, his
Assistants; I heartily recommend this
Epistle to the PHILIPPS. CHAP. IV. Ver. 8.

Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are
true, whatsoever things are honest,
whatsoever things are just, whatsoever
things are pure, whatsoever things are
lovely, whatsoever things are of good
Report: If there be any Vertue, and
if there be any Praise, think on these
things.



THINKING with my self of
some suitable Subject to en-
tertain you with, (my dear
Brethren in Christ) as one of
my last Discourses to you, I chose to
B take

Short Rules for

take it from this Text, so full, so comprehensive of the Christian's Duty in few Words: And not knowing, whether I may have any other Opportunity to preach the Gospel to you, by Reason of my great Age, therefore (leaving you to the Ministry of your faithful Pastor, and other able and godly Preachers, his Assistants;) I heartily recommend this same Counsel to you (and I should do it, if I were upon my Death-bed) which St. Paul gave to his *Philippian* Church, at his taking his Leave of them. *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report: If there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these Things.*

That which I shall do in pursuance of this Text, shall be only,

I. To take some Review of these excellent Things set here before us to think of;

Christian Practice.

3

of; and so to think of, as to practise:
And then,

II. To make some practical Improvement of our Discourse And so to conclude with some particular Addresses to you.

I.

To take a Review of all these excellent Graces and Divine Accomplishments here recommended to us; the serious Thoughts and Practice whereof, to be our constant Care through the Course of our whole Lives. I shall give but some short Explication of each of them, for our better understanding the Import of them; tho' they might require indeed to be much longer insisted upon, if we had Leisure, and would deserve another Sermon.

I. *Whatsoever Things are true.* The first Christian Grace, here recommended, is *Truth*. To be true, that is, to be plain in our Words, faithful to our Pro-

Short Rules for

mises. That we be plain-hearted Men.
That we speak as we think, and think
as we speak.

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II. *Whatsoever Things are honest.* Or
venerable, grave, or seemly, as that Word
is interpreted; that is, that all the Chri-
stian's Carriage and Deportment be ma-
naged with that Gravity, Severity, and
Seemliness that becomes a reasonable
Man and a true Christian. Again,

III. *Whatsoever Things are just.* That
is, That we be exact and punctual in all
our Dealings; and that we wrong no
Man of the least Matter: That we
give every one what is his due, and take
from no Man any thing that belongs to
him, tho' we might do it with never so
much Privacy or Concealment: Or,
being Men of Power, by Violence.

IV. *Whatsoever Things are pure.* That
is, That we preserve our Bodies and
our Minds in Chastity and Modesty, un-
tainted with any unclean Thoughts or
Practices,

Christian Practice.

5

Practices; and, that no frothy, idle; impure Words or Discourses come out of our Lips; to entertain no Impurity so much as in our Thoughts; but if any such come there, at any Time, to throw them out with Indignation.

V. *Whatsoever Things are lovely.* That we study all Ways to render ourselves and our Actions gracious, acceptable, and delightful to Mankind; that our innocent, useful Conversation may gain Love, and not Displeasure to our selves.

VI. *Whatsoever Things are of good report.* That we abstain carefully from whatsoever may blot our Names, or raise any just Scandal upon us among our Brethren: To avoid as much as possible the giving any Occasion to the Talk and Censure of Men. And then it follows, in more general and comprehensive Terms,

VII. *If there be any Vertue.* That is, in short, to prosecute every thing that

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Religion.

Short Rules for

is *Vertuous*, and to shun whatsoever may have the least Tincture of Vice and Immorality in it. To this Purpose is St. Peter's Advice: Give all Diligence to add to your Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity. Behold! this is Vertue, and all these are the goodly Concomitants of it. And,

Lastly, *If there be any Praise.* That is to say, That we exercise not ourselves, nor have anything to do with Things mean and base, or contemptible, and unsuitable to our Holy Profession; but on the contrary, to lay ourselves in such Actions and Employments, as may denominate us wise and good Men: Whence springs the truest Praise. That we may be known and acknowledged, and commended for such. *If there be any Praise.*

And

Christian Practice.

7

And then, all is concluded with this Advice, *Think on these Things.* Think on them, and you cannot but approve them. Think on them; for they are highly worthy your Meditation. Think of them; that is, make Account of them; Esteem them: Propound them to yourselves, as your great standing Rules of Practice in the Management of your Lives, in all the various Circumstances of them. And thus I have gone over all these particular Rules of good Life distinctly, in a plain and short, tho' imperfect, Comment of them.

II.

And now, by Way of *Application* and *Reflection* upon the Account you have heard of these *true, honest, just, pure and lovely Things*,

I. Consider what admirable Things these are which the Apostle here recommends to us: It is a short *Epitome* of the main Duties of our Christian Religion,

Short Rules for

Religion, with Respect to ourselves and others. Here you may take a beautiful Prospect of Religion: What it is indeed. It is the Course and Compass by which we are to steer aright. These are the Rules, by which we are to measure all our Actions in this World: Namely, whatsoever Things are *true*, whatsoever Things are *honest*, and *pure*, *lovely*, and of *good Report*.

Let this Prospect make you in Love with your Christian Religion. For all this is but a Summary of it; a short Account of that which the Doctrine of the Gospel consisteth of, and abounds more largely with. Let the Mention of these Things make you fully acquainted what Religion is in Truth, after all the Talk of it; and what those noble Acquirements are that render a Man Religious. And it will further enable you to judge what that Religion is, that may render us acceptable in the Sight of God. Religion doth not consist, as many Men fondly imagine, in outside Forms and little Observances, or Peculiar,

Christian Practice.

9

liar, nice Doctrines, Opinions, and Speculations. It doth not teach Men to speak a few fine *Phrases*, or to make them set their Faces after an uncouth Fashion; or put them upon opposing Customs, or making Seditions or Disturbances in the Church or State, or in saying, I am of *Paul*, and I am of *Apollos* and I of *Cephas*. It is enough for us, to say, that we are of Christ. Religion is set upon higher, and greater, and nobler Objects. Its main Design is to regulate the evil Lives, and immoral Practices of Men: To make Men true and just, sober and honest, pure and unspotted: To excite Men to the noblest Actions, and the best Things; as these are before you. And hereby to advance us not only to the Esteem and Love of Men, but of God too.

And indeed it is mighty strange, how Men that profess Religion, and would seem to have a greater Concern for it than others, should so lamentably mistake it, and do so much Discredit to it, as to spend so much Time and so

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Short Rules for

great Zeal upon the Outside of Religion, Opinions, and obscure Doctrines, upon Rites and Ceremonies, Models of Worship and Discipline, as tho' Religion chiefly consisted in these smaller Matters; which are rather to be left to the Guides and Governours of the Church, and their Wisdom and Discretion. Whereas Religion's main Purpose is to render us inwardly good and godly. *Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are just and honest, lovely, and of good Report.*

II. Take Notice here, how Morality and Christianity go Hand in Hand: And what an Accord there is between them. There is no such Difference, no such Contradiction between them, as some would pretend. What are all these Things spoken of by the Apostle, and enjoined the Christians, but *Moral Things*? And particularly *Virtue* is here urged: Which is nothing else but another Name for Morality. And on this Account the Ten Commandments are called

Christian Practice.

II

called the *Moral Law*. Which our Saviour introduced into the Gospel; tho' indeed by him much improved and advanced. So that Christianity, as to the Practical Part of it, is but Morality advanced and perfected. And throughout the whole Gospel and Epistles, there is little else urged upon our Practice, (adding only the two Sacraments and the Praying to God in the Name of *Jesus*, and Depending upon the Merits of his Death and Passion) all Duties press'd upon us besides these, may come under the Name of Christian Morality. Such are Justice and Temperance, Meekness and Patience, Humility and Forbearance, Charity and Compassion. And such are the Things in the Text: Things that are true and just and honest, and pure, lovely and of good Report: And therefore let no Man think or speak meanly of *Morality*: Especially the Precepts of it being so much advanced by our Blessed Saviour in his Gospel, and his Apostles in their Epistles.

Short Rules for

III. This Text may serve you as a Rule to direct you in doubtful Cases that may happen to you. It is a safe Compass to Sail by in this dangerous Sea of the World: To enable you to steer your Course in all the Transactions of your Lives. Attend but to these general Rules, *Whatsoever Things are true*, and the rest; and apply them to your particular Cases and Circumstances; and you will find it an excellent Expedient to keep your Consciences clear; and a Means to maintain your whole Conversation blameless.

Suppose, for Example, you are in doubt, whether you may lawfully do such or such an Action, bring your Doubt to this Touch-stone. Doth it not thwart with some of these Counsels here specified? Is it agreeable to what is *true*, or *just*, or *honest*, or *chaste*? Would there be anything in the doing of it, that would render thee *Lovely*, or make thee beloved, or well spoken of; or at least something that would not
render

render thee hateful, or expose thee to the Reproach and ill Word of Men; or on the contrary, would it prove an Act to thee of *good Report*? And accordingly resolve thy own Case.

The Circumstances of Men's Lives are innumerable; and there will fall out very many Cases, wherein a Man will need some Counsel, some discreet Body to consult withal; whether it be lawful, or convenient, or expedient, to do so or so; to do such a Thing, or not to do it. Now, have Recourse to this Text; and impartially compare thy Case, and some of the Particulars of this Text together; and, with a little Pains, thou mayest pass a safe Judgment upon thy Case. Measure all thy Actions by this Scripture-Standard, and thou canst not do amiss.

And as to indifferent Actions, wherein there would be no palpable Sin in the doing, or the not doing of them; What should a Man do in this Case? Here apply thy self to the *πορνη* and the *εὐφρα*. *Π. ε.* to the Things

Short Rules for

Things that will make thee *beloved*, and procure thee a *good Report*. Thy Act hath no downright Sin in it. But is it like to intrench upon thy good Name, or to open the Mouths of People against thee? Or again, it is no Sin, if thou shouldest do it. But is it *Lovely*? Would it not, if thou shouldest do it, expose thee rather to Hatred, or Contempt, or Censure, than reconcile any Love to thee? Thus, Dear Brethren, I heartily recommend this Place of Scripture to you for the assisting you to resolve yourselves in any Doubts or Scruples of Conscience, that you may at any Time happen upon.

IV. And Lastly, Let us be *persuaded to think on these Things*, according as the Apostle concludes. Oh! that we would all walk by this Rule. How sweetly among ourselves, how holily towards our God, should we Live? How blessed a Place would the World be? What a Paradise should we dwell in, if these Things were punctually observed

governed by it? Oh! that we would be persuaded to straighten our crooked Natures by this Measure. Are not these most excellent Things in themselves, that we are exhorted to *Think* upon? To think upon them so effectually, as to make them our Study, our Delight and Practice? Do they not approve themselves to our Minds? Can we object anything against them? Or give any good Reason, why we should not follow after Truth, and Honesty and Justice and Purity, and Things that are Lovely and of good Report, and Vertuous and Praise-worthy?

I And why should our Passions and Infirmities, our foolish Humours, our extravagant Lusts, (that are such mean, such beastly Things) draw us away and govern us? Things which are but so many Excrecences, and Weeds, springing out of our corrupted, vitiated Natures. Oh! why should we let them hinder and stop us from the Practice of these Things, which would render us such excellent Men and Women. To be

Short Rules for

be beloved of God, and approved of Men? For God's sake, be not governed by the Instigations of the Evil Spirit, the Spirit that worketh in the Children of Disobedience: Suffer not yourselves to be such Brutes, as to be carried away by such base Things as Sense, Lust, Passion, Appetite; when you have such Divine Guides here before you: I repeat them again, (the naming of which may reconcile a Love and Esteem of them) *Truth, Honesty or Gravity, Justice and Purity* and the rest. And in short, let it appear in our After-Lives, how convinced we are of the Excellency of these divine Vertues that I have now set before you.

And now to conclude this, and all my former Discourses together, let me say something concerning myself; and then to apply a Word or two to you, my Beloved Brethren in Christ.

As to my self; I have been your Lecturer, now upwards of thirty five Years: So long continued among you by the Long-suffering and Goodness of God.

God. And I hope, I have been instrumental, according to my poor Ability, in building up, and confirming you, and others before you, in your Holy Faith. I dare not say, as St. Paul at his Farewel to his Ephesian Church; *I have not shunned to declare unto you all the Counsel of God:* But this I can say, that I have made it my Business to Preach the Word sincerely, and to declare to you the Counsel of God faithfully, as far as we have it revealed to us in the Gospel: Which with a due and careful Heed and Practice is able to save us, and to give us Inheritance with all those that are Sanctified.

And for that Purpose I have made it my Practice, to Preach plainly and practically, that all might understand, and that all might be edified.

And now my Address to you, my dear Brethren, is, First, to profess my Thankfulness to you for all the Favours and Obligations that I have received from you these many Years: And Praying God, the Father of Mer-

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cies,

Short Rules for

cies, to return your good Will to me sevenfold into your Bosoms. And for which I shall always remember you in my Prayers.

And now I have nothing to add, but a few good Counsels to you, and some short Prayers for you. And all taken from our Holy Apostle at his taking Leave of his Churches.

Rom. xiv.
19.

I. Let us follow after the Things that make for Peace, and Things wherewith one may Edify another.

1 Thessal.
v. 15.

II. Another good Counsel I would leave with you is this; See that none render evil for evil; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all Men.

2 Cor. xii.
11.

III. Finally, Brethren, Be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.

And Praying God, the Father of Mercies,
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Christian Practice.

19

And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly: And I pray God, your whole Soul ^{1 Thess. v.} and Spirit and Body, be preserved blameless ^{27.} unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting Consolation and good Hope ^{2 Thess. ii.} through Grace, comfort your Hearts and ^{16.} establish you in every good Word and Work.

And now, Brethren, I commend you to ^{Act. ix.} God, and the Word of his Grace; which ^{32.} is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them which are Sanctified.

And to end all with the Repetition of the Apostles weighty Words in the Text: Finally, Brethren, Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good Report; if there be any Vertue, and if there be any Praise; think on these things.

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Christian Practice.

And the very Gift of Peace, which is
 wholeness: and I pray God, your whole soul, and
 and spirit and body, be preserved blameless
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 And Jesus Christ himself, and God ever
 with Father, who hath loved us, and given
 us everlasting consolation and good hope, that
 through Grace, comfort your hearts and
 establish you in every good word and work.
 And now, Brethren, I commend you to
 God, and the Word of his Grace; which
 is able to build you up, and to give you an
 inheritance among all them which are saved.

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 are true, whatsoever things are honest,
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